

**Pentecost 2025**  
**“Outside the Bubble”**  
**Psalm 104:24-35, Acts 2:1-21**  
**Rev. Joy Laughridge**  
**June 8, 2025**

Let me begin by saying happy birthday! We are over 2000 years old, and today, on Pentecost Sunday, we remember and celebrate our birth story. If you didn't remember that today is Pentecost, you might have been reminded when you came into the sanctuary and saw some of the familiar symbols that are associated with the day. Red is the liturgical color for Pentecost, so we have the red paraments up today. There's a dove on the bulletin cover which represents the Holy Spirit who descended from above and filled the apostles. The flames on the bulletin cover are another symbol that point us back to Luke's description of the tongues like fire that rested over the apostles when they were filled with the Holy Spirit who gave them power. Wind which represents the breath of God that blows through creation and awakens new life is another familiar symbol for Pentecost.

Well, today I'd like to offer a new and unconventional symbol to associate with Pentecost. It's the thing that Doris already introduced in her time with the children. It's a bubble or bubbles. Now I'm not saying that we need to start creating liturgical banners with bubbles on them or that we need to persuade the universal church to start using bubbles to represent who and what the Holy Spirit does. All I want is to help us think for a few minutes about what the Holy Spirit did on the church's birthday and what the Spirit is still doing today, and I think the image of bubbles can help us with this.

My mind started going down this little trail this week as I was reflecting on some conversations that I've been having with someone

that I met several years ago through my involvement in a civic club. In a lot of ways, we are quite different. Especially in terms of our religious backgrounds and upbringing. He was raised by a Jewish father and Muslim mother, and is Jewish himself, but when we first met, he always told me that he was Jewish but an atheist. To me he seemed to be a very spiritually curious atheist, but that's what he claimed. On Easter this year, he reached out and told me he had attended an Easter worship service, and it was very meaningful to him. Something was stirred up inside him, and since then we've had further discussions in which he is asking about Jesus and Christianity. I have just been a friend and conversation partner, but I have the feeling that the Holy Spirit is at work and has been at work for some time awakening something and drawing him to Jesus.

If you're wondering what any of this has to do with bubbles, I'm getting to that. These conversations got me thinking about the little bubbles that people inhabit. Generally speaking, and I say this without any judgment about it- it's just an observation- people do tend to live in the bubbles of our limited experience. We are raised in ethnic, religious, local, and familiar cultures. We live and move in work, and social, and recreational environments that are relatively contained. We tend to spend most of our time with people who look, and talk, and think like we do. All of this makes up our bubbles, and most of the time we don't venture too far out of our bubbles. This seems to be pretty normal human behavior, but there seem to be some downsides to it.

One downside is that it can make it difficult to understand and empathize with other people who live in their own different bubbles, and instead of building connections and meaningful relationships with the people in other bubbles, instead of learning to love others who are different, we remain separated from each other inside our bubble walls. We miss opportunities to learn and grow when we don't

visit and engage other bubbles or welcome visitors into our own, and worse than that, humans have a tendency to believe that their own bubble is superior to others which then leads to treating others as if they are bad or inferior just because they are different.

Another downside to sticking mostly in our own bubbles, is that we may forget or be somewhat unaware of the fact that the Spirit of God is present and moving in all kinds of different ways in all of those other bubbles to draw people to their Creator. This is what the story about my friend got me thinking about. While I'm over here in my little world doing my thing, trying to pay attention to and cooperate with what the Holy Spirit is doing around me, the Holy Spirit has *also* been over in my friend's little world the whole time, awakening his spirit and drawing him to Jesus by speaking to him in ways and in a language that are accessible to him. And when I am reminded that the Spirit is moving over in my friend's bubble, it reminds me that the same thing is true about what God is doing in all the other bubbles out there that fill our world.

This is what is proclaimed to us in Scripture today. There is no place in the realm of all creation where God is not involved or where the Spirit of God is not moving to make Jesus and God's salvation known. Psalm 104 proclaims that God doesn't even limit God's activity to the bubble of *human* activity. God made every creature great and small, and God remains in relationship with creation and sustains it with life-giving Spirit breath, but the story of Pentecost shows us that this is true in the realm of human life also. On that day when the Spirit was poured out on the Apostles, there was a major convergence of bubbles. Pilgrims had come from all over for the festival in Jerusalem, and when the Spirit fell and filled the apostles, the Spirit spoke intelligibly through them in language that made sense in every bubble. All kinds of people who were different from each other heard the message and believed, and a new, expansive,

inclusive, and diverse community was created and united by faith in Jesus Christ. God's great love for everyone everywhere was revealed in a powerful and unique way on that day.

It's difficult to hear the story of Pentecost or to witness the beautiful diversity within the church of Jesus Christ and then deny that the Holy Spirit has moved and continues to move and blow throughout every nook and cranny of the world. We may live and move in the bubbles of our cultures, and languages, and preferences, as do others, but the Spirit of God inhabits and operates in all of them. If you are willing to indulge me and allow the bubble to be a symbol of Pentecost at least for today, you can imagine a whole bunch of bubbles like the ones that come out when you blow through a wand, and those bubbles represent every country, and every culture and subculture, and just like all of the bubbles that you blow through the wand are filled with the same air, it is the same Spirit that is moving and awakening people in every bubble to the possibility of and reality of salvation and new life in Christ.

The symbol of the bubble can remind us that the Spirit is present and moving everywhere, and it can also be a symbol that reminds and challenges us to move outside of our own bubbles – our personal bubble and also our church bubble - so that we can see what the Spirit is doing outside of our own space and also join in as we are given chances to join in. If we are willing to venture outside of our normal pathways and passages, we might just have chances to witness the Spirit's very exciting activity in the lives of other people - like I am getting to witness the Spirit at work in my friend's life - and we might find out in our real experience that the Spirit means to bear witness to Jesus through us in some of those bubbles.

I guess another way to say all of this is to say that when we remember what God did on Pentecost when the Spirit was poured

out, and when we think about how and where the Holy Spirit is moving today all around us, it's a reminder that what God is doing on a day to day basis certainly includes and involves you and me individually but it's so much bigger than you and me, too. It's a reminder that even if we aren't paying attention to when, and where, and how it's happening, the Holy Spirit is reaching, and revealing, and pursuing, and drawing people to Jesus so that through him they can receive God's mercy and grace and find their place in God's ever growing and expanding family. This is what the Holy Spirit is doing, and as we remember how the apostles were filled with the Spirit and proclaimed good news on Pentecost, we see what we are meant to do. Jesus means for us to pay attention to where and how his Spirit is moving and to jump in and participate. He has filled us with the same Spirit that filled the apostles, and he is sending us to go outside of our bubbles where we will find people to be loved and people who have already been prepared by the Spirit to hear about and receive Jesus and his love. All we have to do is be ourselves, let the light of Christ shine through us, and practice going outside of our bubble now and then. Amen.